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THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL JOURNAL

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Educational News and Editorial Comment

THE COMMONWEALTH RESEARCH FUND

In the *Elementary School Journal* for March, 1921, there appeared an editorial describing in considerable detail the plan of organization and the proposed program of educational research of the Commonwealth Fund. The large significance of this kind of provision for research makes the results of the first year's activities of particular interest. An account of the investigations made possible through grants from this fund is given in the following extract from a statement of Samuel P. Capen, secretary of the Educational Research Committee of the Commonwealth Fund.

The Educational Research Committee has held three regular meetings. Two of these were devoted to the assignment among the most promising projects of the appropriation made for the academic year 1920-21. At the third meeting held in October, 1921, a portion of the appropriation for the academic year 1921-22 was assigned. A brief account of the projects which have been supported may be of interest. It will be noted that these all fall within the first three of the major fields of study indicated in the initial report of the conference.

EDUCATIONAL FINANCE

The Commonwealth Fund has joined with three other educational foundations in appropriating to the American Council on Education a sum sufficient to carry forward a comprehensive investigation of educational finance in the United States. The program for public education laid down in legislative

enactments and state constitutions will be examined to determine to what extent communities are already meeting the public desires. Effort will be made to investigate the cost of the program designated by the public. The possibility of effecting economies will be studied. The relation of educational expenditures to expenditures for other governmental purposes will be worked out. Intensive studies will be made in individual states that may be regarded as typical, and the most important facts covering the country as a whole will be assembled and collated. The American Council on Education has appointed a special commission to take charge of this investigation.

An appropriation has also been granted to Columbia University for the preparation under the direction of Professor George D. Strayer of an initial report on city school budgets.

MEASURES AND STANDARDS OF ACHIEVEMENT IN SCHOOL SUBJECTS

Appropriations have been made to Columbia University for the conduct of two investigations under the direction of Professor E. L. Thorndike. The first investigation deals with the possible reorganization of the teaching material in algebra and the methods of presenting that subject. What is known about the psychology of algebra is to be collected, gaps in that knowledge are to be noted and filled by appropriate investigations so far as possible, especially such as are important in possible changes in curricula and methods.

The second investigation relates to vocational guidance. It is designed to prepare standard tests of ability to continue school work, of ability to learn to do clerical work, and of ability in the mechanical trades and factory work. These tests are to be for use with boys and girls of approximately fifteen or sixteen years of age. It is expected that they will be so formulated as not to require the services of a psychologist to give them.

Two appropriations have been made to the University of Chicago, one for the use of Professor Judd and assistants in conducting a laboratory study of reading, and the other to Professor Morrison for devising a series of tests designed to measure the progress of pupils in French under ordinary high-school instruction. In the investigation of reading, laboratory methods are used which teachers cannot employ. The movements of the eyes of adults and children are photographed under different conditions while they are reading various kinds of passages. It is expected that in this way the processes involved in good and bad reading and in mature and immature reading may be determined. Once the characteristics of various kinds of readings are ascertained, it is possible to turn over to teachers many useful suggestions about the handling of pupils.

The French investigation is designed to throw light upon the effectiveness of grammatical as compared with non-grammatical methods in learning to read the foreign language; the pupil's command of grammatical usage in functional form compared with his knowledge of grammatical principles abstractly stated; and the relation between the ability to get the meaning of a series of French

words stated apart from any context and the ability to react to the meaning of the same words when they are included in a piece of discourse.

An appropriation was made to be spent by the chairman of the Educational Research Committee on a preliminary conference on the social studies. The conference outlined the problems in the reorganization of teaching material in the social studies and on the basis of its report the committee has recommended further appropriations for a historical review of the social studies and an evaluation of current experiments in new methods of presenting these subjects.

An appropriation has been made to the Board of Education of Winnetka, Illinois, for the conduct of a study under the direction of Superintendent Carleton W. Washburne of periodical and reference literature to determine the commonly known and referred to historical and geographical material, with a view to the possible reorganization of the school material for teaching these subjects.

A grant has been made to the Leland Stanford Junior University for a study, under the direction of Professor L. M. Terman, of gifted children in California. At present, such children remain unidentified and submerged in the school's masses. The usual curriculum methods leave their intellectual and volitional resources largely undeveloped, sometimes possibly perverted. It may be more important to discover and to give appropriate educational opportunity to a single gifted child than to prevent the birth of a thousand feeble-minded. The investigation proposes to secure certain basic facts with reference to approximately one thousand school children of exceptionally superior intellectual ability, and to follow up the records and achievements of these pupils over a period of years.

A subsidy has been granted to the New York Association of Consulting Psychologists for a study partly similar in its objects to that of Professor Terman. It is proposed to give intensive psychological examinations to students in a group of public schools in New York in order to determine the ability of children as they enter school, classify them as to ability and follow them up by re-examinations and through the services of a home worker, and thus to lay the basis of possible modifications of courses of study for the benefit of intellectually superior children and that the less able children may be given better opportunities for development.

REORGANIZATION OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS OF THE PUBLIC EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

The fund has made a grant to the University of Minnesota to be under the direction of Professor L. V. Koos in studying and critically evaluating the present status of the junior-college movement. There are now upward of three hundred of these institutions and they are multiplying rapidly. It is the purpose of the study to show their relations to secondary education, to the prevailing four-year college of liberal arts, and to professional education.

Such a study, it is believed, should have large influence in determining the trend of future efforts toward educational reorganization at the level of the lower years of the college course.

The Educational Research Committee believes that there should be many more appeals for subventions than have thus far come to it and that requests should be made by a much wider range of institutions. Indeed the conditions of the grant and the policy of the committee are so flexible that any first-class project which can be clearly defined and budgeted is likely to receive favorable consideration. The committee meets three times a year, in the autumn, in the early spring, and in the early summer.

The address of the secretary of the Educational Research Committee, Mr. Samuel P. Capen, is 818 Connecticut Avenue, Washington, D.C.

SIZE OF SCHOOL CLASSES

The *London Times* discloses in a discussion on the size of classes, published in its "Educational Supplement," something of the distress in which the English educational system finds itself because of a shortage of funds, and at the same time propounds a question for which there is no scientific answer on the basis of available experimental data. A part of the article is as follows:

Always a popular subject with teachers, the size of classes has at the present moment a certain special interest, for it has got hitched on to the vital problem of salaries. It is worth following up the educational principles involved in the proposal to economize by increasing the size of school classes. All the world knows that the London County Council had set out long before the war on a scheme of gradually reducing the size of classes in the elementary school so that forty should be the standard number. This involved a reconstruction of the classroom accommodation within the whole area and a gradually increasing cost in the matter of teachers' salaries. But the scheme was well organized, and everything was going on well toward the realization of the ideal when the war intervened and put a stop to everything of the kind. It was hoped, however, that at the worst the adverse conditions would do no more than stop the immediate progress: it was not expected that the movement would be reversed and plans made for increasing the size of school classes all round. The proposal is not put in that precise form. It is so generally recognized that the present size of classes ought to be reduced that the proposal rather takes the form of securing economy—or, to put it more accurately, a saving—by the reduction of the size of school staffs.

Again, leaving out of account the big economic question and assuming for the moment that it is a wise policy to economize on education at all, the

problem remains of how it may be accompanied by the minimum amount of educational damage. A reduction of salaries all round is the most obvious way of effecting an immediate saving. The teachers naturally object. It is not unreasonable to apply to them the same argument as was used in the case of the miners—"Either accept less money or produce more coal." Put thus, the proposition is not unfair if the product of our work happened to be material. But working with coal is different from working with children. If miners work a day longer in the week or an hour longer in the day the resulting coal bears no mark to indicate the change. In dealing with children it is different. With a class of forty a teacher can produce different results from what he can with a class of sixty. With the larger class he has certainly harder work; there is more strain during class hours, with longer periods of correction out of school hours. So far as the teacher suffers by this increased strain he is in exactly the same position as the miner whose hours are increased. Within the limits of not breaking down altogether, the teacher, like his fellow workers in all departments, must take his share in the increased effort demanded by the present adverse conditions. But where the interests of the children suffer a new element enters.

Even here, it is true, the same sort of argument may be used. Why should we not say that at a time of general distress everybody, children included, should share the disadvantages. So long as their education does not become positively harmful, why should they not suffer a slight lowering of its quality, such as might result from an increase in the number of pupils in a class? This throws us back upon an inquiry into the disadvantages of large classes. The current view is that the best work can be done with an elementary class of thirty-five to forty and a secondary class of twenty-five to thirty. It is true that there are those who would demand a lower total in both cases, and still others who would reverse the ratios and demand a smaller class in the elementary school as compared with the secondary.

We must not forget that there are those who see certain positive advantages in the large classes. For some purposes it is true that quite large classes can be treated more satisfactorily than small ones. Dr. F. H. Hayward never tires of pleading for the large class in everything where stimulus and inspiration form parts of the essence of the teaching process. Even when it comes to matters of instruction a case is sometimes made out for very large classes. It must not be supposed that the monitorial system is by its very nature limited to elementary-school work. The plan has been recommended for secondary schools under certain conditions.

A SCHOOL CITY

Very little in a practical way has been done in the past to teach citizenship to the boys and girls in the public schools except from the textbook. To meet the need, and at the same time interest

the pupils in good citizenship, the grammar school of Newport Beach, California, was organized into a city government similar to that of Newport Beach, as follows: Six trustees were elected and various boards, such as board of health, board of public property, police force, and board of education. A court was also instituted before which all cases of misdemeanor are tried, one of the teachers acting as judge.

The duties of the various boards are as the names imply. The board of health sees that the basements are kept clean and that the yard is free from paper and other rubbish. In fact, the board of health has in charge the sanitation of the school. Needless to say, the board does its duty. The board of public property takes charge of all school properties such as athletic supplies, seats, desks, etc. Any wilful damage to school property is brought to the notice of the board, which makes an estimate of the damage done, and a bill is presented to the person who caused the damage. The police enforce the laws of the school government by requesting all law-breakers to appear before the court at stated times to answer for their disregard for law and the rights of others. The board of education tries to help those who are backward in their studies by encouragement and such explanation and help as they are able to give.

The school government has been in operation for about six months and, contrary to the predictions of some few persons, it works even beyond the expectations of those who originated it. The entire school atmosphere is more wholesome than it ever was previous to the organizing of the self-government plan. Following are some extracts from a letter written to the principal by Mrs. Margaret S. McNaught, commissioner of elementary schools: "I cannot find any weak places in your plan. I know enough about the sort of thing you are doing to know it is one of the most difficult ways of conducting the government of a school and one of the most valuable. . . . I sincerely hope your school will hold to your citizenship training, because I believe you are on exactly the right track."

In a recent supposed dialogue, published in the local paper, arguments pro and con were given for the benefit of those who are

interested enough in the self-government plan to inquire into it in detail.

It may be said in conclusion that if it is important that a child be taught reading, writing, and arithmetic, it is doubly important that he be taught citizenship; for school subjects should be only tools to be used by the individual in developing himself into a political, moral, and religious force, to put into practice those principles for which our forefathers came to America.

H. O. ENSIGN

SUPERVISING PRINCIPAL
NEWPORT-BALBOA

NEW YORK RATING SYSTEM FOR TEACHERS

For ten years or more the New York school system has been struggling with the problem of preparing a scheme for the rating of teachers. The usual objections to any plan which puts promotion and increases in salary on a merit basis have been vigorously urged against the earlier efforts of the various committees that have worked on the New York plan. There have been misunderstandings and delays, but finally a plan has been officially adopted.

The handbook describing the plan is briefly reviewed in the bulletin issued by the principals, as follows:

The first eight pages explain the purpose of the handbook and of the new rating forms. The next twenty-four pages give brief definitions of the elements of teaching listed on the back of the individual rating report. A separate chapter is devoted to each of the five general headings: professional attitude, instruction, discipline, personal attributes, routine.

The same bulletin comments on the basic principles involved in such a plan as follows:

In the preparation of any rating plan and also in its administration, there are five fundamental principles. The first of these is that the rating plan must have as its main purpose the guiding of teachers into better service. It must be inspirational and instructive. Both teachers and supervising officers must get away from the idea of rating as punishment, if any rating system is to have any value in the improvement of teaching or the satisfaction of the community. A rating plan which serves only as punishment produces resentment among teachers and acts as a deterrent to improvement and a bar to securing good teachers. But a rating plan which is recognized by both teachers and supervisors as a means of instructing young or inexperienced

teachers, as a professional method of correcting errors and negligences which even more experienced teachers may fall into, and as a businesslike scheme of estimating a teacher's right to salary increase, promotion, and preferment—such a rating plan will have no opponents among faithful or intelligent or ambitious teachers.

The successful operation of this first consideration is dependent upon the second and third of our fundamental principles. The second involves the relations between the rating official and the teacher. There is but one way to establish the right relationship and that lies in the procedure preceding the giving of the rating. The second fundamental principle, therefore, is that the recording of the rating must be preceded by (a) Personal conferences between principal and teacher. (b) Written suggestions to the teacher showing where her work needs improvement and how she may accomplish it. (c) Opportunity to observe good work both in her own school and elsewhere. (d) Written record of items which will enter into the rating, particularly if the rating mark is likely to be unfavorable. The record should be made as each item is noted and a copy should always be given to the teacher at the same time the item is noted.

The third principle is that the teacher should be fully informed, in advance, upon beginning service in any school system, just what requirements will enter into the estimation of the value of her work and also just how that estimation of her work will be recorded. The third consideration, then, deals with the relation established with teachers by the employing officials, the Board of Education and the superintendent of schools. I was a teacher several years before I knew anything about any record of my services, more years before I saw a rating blank, and still more before I understood or was told anything about how the record of my ratings would enter into my chances for promotion. There is no such lack of information among teachers of any experience in New York City today, but there is an absolute absence of *advance* information for the new teacher and there is no *official* information for anyone.

What wonder, then, that the fourth principle is so often violated? This fourth principle demands that the rating plan shall be understood so generally and clearly that teachers in the same school system shall not suffer because of differences in ideals, differences in requirements. Teachers' results cannot be counted out like bricks laid. There are always emergencies, unforeseen conditions, which enter into, must enter into, the amount or the excellence even of work which can be measured in bricks or pounds or by a yard-stick. How much more so with the teacher of little children! But in the main essentials, in those requirements which every good school system must secure and justly asks of teachers, there should be definite explanations given, definite standards set up, and an earnest effort to secure uniformity of application.

Lastly, the rating plan must be administered by the principal or other rating official with courage and with justice. We need not dwell on this fifth consideration. It should be self-evident, and it will be if a scientific plan of

rating teachers is prepared, which gives due consideration to each of the underlying principles already enumerated. Let us be honest enough now to acknowledge that it has sometimes happened that courage or justice has been missing, sometimes both lost, in the giving of teachers' ratings. The reasons are known to us all,—failure on the part of some employing officials to sustain the principal who has marked down an unsatisfactory teacher with influential connections; the fear of offending teachers during the shortage of the past ten years; misinformation and misunderstanding on both sides. Let us use our new strength as a united body of principals to push all these things into the past era and live with our teachers in a new period of mutual confidence, complete understanding of requirements, and conscientious fulfilment of duties and regulations arrived at in open conference and concurred in by the teachers because their judgment has been consulted and their initiative allowed expression. These are the essentials of right relationship.

But no principal can establish such relations without the aid of a rating plan based on the fundamental considerations outlined and also accorded proper respect by higher school officials. No teacher can be sure that his services will receive due consideration for promotion unless they are recorded in a manner respected by teacher, principal, and higher officials. No community can be certain that it is securing, retaining, and promoting those teachers who are giving in return for its trust and its money the best possible services unless those services are properly judged and recorded.

Finally, the gist of the rating system is summarized on the official individual rating card which gives the following list of qualifications on which teachers are to be judged:

I. INSTRUCTION

- A. Use of English
- B. Knowledge of subject-matter
- C. Skill in teaching:
 - 1. Evidence of preparation
 - 2. Definiteness of aim
 - 3. Appropriateness of method
 - 4. Good questioning
 - 5. Thoroughness of drill
 - 6. Participation and interest of class
- D. Results obtained

II. DISCIPLINE

- A. Control of class
- B. Training pupils in self-control
- C. Effect on attendance and truancy
- D. Character building

III. PROFESSIONAL ATTITUDE

- A. Regularity of attendance and punctuality
- B. Co-operation
- C. Social service
- D. Volunteer activities
- E. Care of physical welfare of child
- F. Loyalty
- G. Self-improvement

IV. PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES

- A. Personal appearance
- B. Use of voice
- C. Cheerfulness
- D. Courtesy
- E. Self-control
- F. Initiative and demonstrated leadership
- G. Tact
- H. Sympathy

V. ROUTINE

- A. Accuracy and promptness in preparing reports and in keeping records
- B. Classroom administration

STUDY OF CHILDREN OF PRESCHOOL AGE

Professor B. T. Baldwin contributes the following statement of a new laboratory which has been organized under his direction at Iowa City:

A laboratory in child psychology for experimental work with children from two to four years of age has been opened by the Child Welfare Research Station at the State University of Iowa. Twenty-four children are in daily attendance in two sections from nine to twelve o'clock.

From the educational point of view the object of the preschool laboratory is to provide an opportunity for little children to become adjusted to a normal group environment while still enjoying the characteristic individual activities of early childhood.

From the scientific standpoint the laboratory provides material for observing the reactions of children of an age that has never been extensively studied because of the difficulty of providing controlled experimental conditions in the home environment.

The children are occupied with a very simple and flexible schedule of singing, games, stories, rhythmic exercises, and simple occupational projects. A graduate assistant keeps a detailed log book of observations made on the children and notes interesting reactions and the conditions under which new abilities develop. The children willingly leave the group to play other interesting

"games" in the psychological examination rooms. A variety of mental examinations have already been made on each child. Several studies on different phases of the development of motor co-ordination are in progress. Physical measurements of each child are made once a month. Investigations are also made into the heredity, home conditions, and special characteristics of the families of the children as a background for the psychological findings.

The laboratory consists of a new six-room building especially designed and furnished for this work. In addition to the usual radiators set high above the reach of the children heat pipes are distributed between the two floors in order that the children will be protected when sitting on the floor in the coldest weather.

The main group room, twenty-four feet square, is at the front of the building with twelve large windows admitting light from three sides. The woodwork is stained moss green, and the walls of cream beaver board are paneled with green wood strips. Chintz curtains in nursery rhyme pattern hang at the sides of the windows, the broad sills of which are covered with potted plants.

There are small low tables and chairs—not the stereotyped kind with turned legs, but sturdy models with attractive straight lines. Large hand-colored illustrations of fairy tales add to the charm of this very homelike room. Hinged to the wainscoting at three sides of the room are a dozen little lattice gates which when swung out into the room form partial inclosures in which the children play individual games and lie during the mid-morning rest period. There is a sand table, a slide, a set of large building blocks for making "real" houses, a phonograph with special records for such young children, and a great variety of material for occupational projects besides the outdoor play equipment of swings and teeter board.

Opening out from the group room is a laboratory and a small pantry with sink and gas stove. The plumbing fixtures of these rooms are small and set low for the little children. A large cupboard and the entrance hall which also serves as a cloakroom isolate the two laboratory rooms from the group room.

HEALTH CAMPAIGN IN AKRON, OHIO

A campaign to improve the diet standards of children of school age was recently conducted in Akron, Ohio. As a preliminary step, 1,011 children were weighed and measured under the direction of school authorities. Of these children 58 per cent were underweight, nearly a fourth of these being more than 10 per cent underweight. On the suggestion of the home demonstration agent of the United States Department of Agriculture and state agricultural college the children were given one-half pint of milk in the

middle of the morning, and the other underweight children were merely taught how to improve their weight themselves. At the close of the second month it was found that 67 per cent of all the children underweight had made some gain.

At this time the agent met with the mothers of these children to demonstrate the results of improved diet and to explain how to plan balanced meals. In this demonstration sixty boys and girls who had the largest underweight percentages were selected for physical examinations, made by a physician in the presence of the parents. Each mother was told what the proper average weight for age and height is. She was given a health card on which to record her child's health habits for a week. The record was to show the number of hours of sleep daily and a complete diet list, which was to be filled out and used according to instructions given by the home demonstration agent. Other health habits, such as deep breathing and teeth brushing, were also to be recorded.

The demonstration was followed by weekly conferences of the mothers of the underweight children with the doctor, nurse, and home demonstration agent, at which the health record for the week was examined, the weekly weights taken and additional instruction and advice given the parents. As a result, almost every mother reported intelligent interest on the part of the children in the food work.

"We never sit down to the table but that the question arises as to whether or not we are having the right things to eat," said one mother in speaking of the excellent results achieved through this piece of nutrition work.